

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself
and Mr. VOINOVICH):

S. 140. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to extend loan forgiveness for certain loans to Head Start teachers; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today with Senator VOINOVICH to introduce legislation to expand the Federal loan forgiveness program to include Head Start teachers and administrators.

Nationwide, only 22 percent of Head Start teachers have completed a baccalaureate or advanced degree program. In California, that number is even smaller: about 16 percent of Head Start teachers have completed a bachelor's degree.

A survey completed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in June 2000 called the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey, FACES, found a strong relationship between the education of the Head Start teacher and classroom quality. "Teachers with higher education levels were found to be more sensitive and responsive to their children, to have more high quality language activities, and more creative activities in their classrooms."

Teachers with higher levels of education also had classes with more high quality language activities such as reading books to the children and provided more opportunities for children to develop skills in expressing thoughts.

Equally important, teachers with higher levels of education were found to be more responsive and sensitive to the children in their classes.

Head Start is one of the most important Federal programs because it has the potential to reach children early in their formative years when their cognitive skills are just developing.

We know that poor children disproportionately start school behind their peers, they are less likely to count to 10 or to recite the alphabet.

Providing low-income children with access to programs that encourage cognitive learning and prepare them to enter school ready to learn is important.

Head Start is one example of a Federal program that has the potential to reach every low-income child; to help every eligible child learn to count to ten and begin to recite the alphabet.

Many of our Nation's youngsters, however, enter elementary school without the basic skills necessary to succeed. Often these children lag behind their peers throughout their academic career.

As taxpayers, we will spend millions on efforts to help these children catch up. Many of these children will never catch up.

Several studies confirm the importance of providing low-income children

with the opportunity early on to gain basic cognitive skills: a study conducted on a preschool program in Chicago showed that for every dollar invested, \$8 was saved by society in projected costs. Additionally, 26 percent more children were likely to finish high school and 40 percent were less likely to repeat a grade.

The National Head Start Association found that for every dollar invested in Head Start, at least \$2.50 is saved because these children need less remedial education and are less likely to be on welfare programs or involved with the juvenile justice system than non-Head Start peers.

The Rand Corporation found that for every dollar invested in early childhood learning programs, taxpayers save between \$4 and \$7 later by reducing the need for alcohol and drug treatment programs, special education programs, mental health services, and the likelihood of incarceration.

We can save millions by providing low-income children with access to quality preschool where they will gain the necessary skills to succeed in school and life.

In order to give every child a head start in life, we must continue to recruit qualified teachers to the Head Start field who have demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, early childhood development, and other areas of the preschool curriculum with a particular focus on cognitive learning.

Obtaining and maintaining teachers with such qualifications is the only way to jump-start cognition learning and to ensure that our youngsters start elementary school ready to learn.

In 2000, the Head Start 2010 National Advisory Panel presided over fifteen national hearings and open forums. The panel found: "There was a tremendous amount of testimony about the fact that, despite increases resulting from Federal quality set-aside funding, relatively low salaries and poor or non-existent benefits make it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff over the long term."

Witnesses stated that many staff positions remain vacant and turnover is likely to worsen if compensation does not improve significantly. . . . comments included passionate exhortations for greater investment in staff, observing that, in Head Start . . . the quality of the program is tied directly to the quality of the staff."

Many Head Start programs in California are losing qualified teachers to local school districts in part because the pay is better, nationally, the average Head Start teacher made \$20,700 in 2000 compared to \$40,575 for an elementary and secondary school teacher.

Head Start teachers are making half of that elementary and secondary teachers are paid on average.

Low pay, combined with mounting student loan debt, is a real deterrent to getting college graduates to become Head Start teachers.

And every teacher Head Start loses impacts access to services for our Nation's youngsters.

Today, there are no educational requirements for a Head Start teacher other than a child development associate CDA, credential, requiring 24 early child education credits and 16 general education credits.

By 2003, 50 percent of Head Start teachers will be required to have at minimum an associate or 2-year degree.

Following the recommendation of the Head Start 2010 National Advisory Panel, I believe we must elevate the compensation to attract and retain qualified individuals to commit to long-term careers in Head Start.

The loan forgiveness incentives in this bill are meant to encourage recent graduates, current Head Start teachers without a degree, and college students to enter and remain in the Head Start field. In exchange for 5 years of service, a Head Start teacher administrator could receive up to \$5,000 of the Federal Stafford Loan forgiven.

I believe we must continue to improve the Head Start program such that children leave the program able to count to ten, to recognize sizes and colors, and can begin to recite the alphabet, to name a few indicators of cognitive learning.

This is just the first step. To further ensure cognitive learning, we must also continue to raise the standards and pay for Head Start teachers.

Ensuring that our nation's youngster have access to highly educated and qualified teachers should be a priority of this Congress.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 140

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR HEAD
START TEACHERS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the "Loan Forgiveness for Head Start Teachers Act of 2003".

(b) HEAD START TEACHERS.—Section 428J of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1078–10) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

"(1)(A) has been employed—

"(i) as a full-time teacher for 5 consecutive complete school years in a school that qualifies under section 465(a)(2)(A) for loan cancellation for Perkins loan recipients who teach in such a school; or

"(ii) as a Head Start teacher for 5 consecutive complete program years under the Head Start Act; and

"(B)(i) if employed as a secondary school teacher, is teaching a subject area that is relevant to the borrower's academic major as certified by the chief administrative officer of the public or nonprofit private secondary school in which the borrower is employed;

"(ii) if employed as an elementary school teacher, has demonstrated, as certified by the chief administrative officer of the public

or nonprofit private elementary school in which the borrower is employed, knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the elementary school curriculum; and

“(iii) if employed as a Head Start teacher, has demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, early childhood development, and other areas of a preschool curriculum, with a focus on cognitive learning; and”;

(2) in subsection (g), by adding at the end the following:

“(3) HEAD START.—An individual shall be eligible for loan forgiveness under this section for service described in clause (ii) of subsection (b)(1)(A) only if such individual received a baccalaureate or graduate degree on or after the date of enactment of the Loan Forgiveness for Head Start Teachers Act of 2003.”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007 and succeeding fiscal years to carry out loan repayment under this section for service described in clause (ii) of subsection (b)(1)(A).”.

(c) DIRECT STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 460 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087j) is amended—

(A) in subsection (b)(1), by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following:

“(A)(i) has been employed—

“(I) as a full-time teacher for 5 consecutive complete school years in a school that qualifies under section 465(a)(2)(A) for loan cancellation for Perkins loan recipients who teach in such a school; or

“(II) as a Head Start teacher for 5 consecutive complete program years under the Head Start Act; and

“(ii)(I) if employed as a secondary school teacher, is teaching a subject area that is relevant to the borrower's academic major as certified by the chief administrative officer of the public or nonprofit private secondary school in which the borrower is employed;

“(II) if employed as an elementary school teacher, has demonstrated, as certified by the chief administrative officer of the public or nonprofit private elementary school in which the borrower is employed, knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the elementary school curriculum; and

“(III) if employed as a Head Start teacher, has demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, early childhood development, and other areas of a preschool curriculum, with a focus on cognitive learning; and”;

(B) in subsection (g), by adding at the end the following:

“(3) HEAD START.—An individual shall be eligible for loan forgiveness under this section for service described in subclause (II) of subsection (b)(1)(A)(i) only if such individual received a baccalaureate or graduate degree on or after the date of enactment of the Loan Forgiveness for Head Start Teachers Act of 2003.”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007 and succeeding fiscal years to carry out loan repayment under this section for service described in subclause (II) of subsection (b)(1)(A)(i).”.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 460 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087j) is amended—

(A) in subsection (c)(1), by inserting “or fifth complete program year” after “fifth complete school year of teaching”;

(B) in subsection (f), by striking “subsection (b)” and inserting “subsection (b)(1)(A)(i)(I)”;

(C) in subsection (g)(1)(A), by striking “subsection (b)(1)(A)” and inserting “subsection (b)(1)(A)(i)(I)”;

(D) in subsection (h), by inserting “except as part of the term ‘program year’,” before “where”.

(d) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 428J of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1078–10) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(1), by inserting “or fifth complete program year” after “fifth complete school year of teaching”;

(2) in subsection (f), by striking “subsection (b)” and inserting “subsection (b)(1)(A)(i)”;

(3) in subsection (g)(1)(A), by striking “subsection (b)(1)(A)” and inserting “subsection (b)(1)(A)(i)”;

(4) in subsection (h), by inserting “except as part of the term ‘program year’,” before “where”.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to again join my friend and colleague, Senator FEINSTEIN, to reintroduce legislation which will encourage young teachers to go into early childhood education, encourage further learning and credentialing of early learning educators, and lead to better education for our Nation's youngest children.

There is no more important time in a child's life than their earliest years. Scientific research tells us that babies are born with 100 billion neurons, or brain cells, that are waiting to make connections, or synapses, with one another. These synapses empower the brain and dictate healthy development and future learning. By the time a baby is three, 1,000 trillion connections have been made, twice as many synapses as most adults have.

However, at age 11, children start eliminating those brain connections that have not been used, thus decreasing their potential for learning and development.

To maximize their learning potential, we must begin to teach our children the necessary skills before they reach kindergarten. Researchers have found that focusing on these earliest years can make the greatest difference in a child's development and learning, and I know of few other programs that provide the same focus as Head Start.

Our bill, the Loan Forgiveness for Head Start Teachers Act of 2003, is designed to encourage currently enrolled and incoming college students working on a Bachelor's or a Master's degree to pursue a career as a Head Start teacher. In exchange for a 5-year teaching commitment in a qualified Head Start program, a college graduate with a minimum of a bachelor's degree could receive up to \$5,000 in forgiveness for their Federal Stafford student loan.

I was pleased that in the 107th Congress, during debate over the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, this bill was offered as an amendment and was overwhelmingly passed by the Senate. Unfortunately, the amendment was not included in the final version of the No Child Left Behind Act. However, the

support our bill received in the Senate gives me great hope that this legislation will be enacted in the 108th Congress.

When I was Governor of Ohio, we invested heavily in Head Start so that there was room for every eligible child in Ohio. Because of our efforts, Ohio is 4th in the nation in terms of children served by Head Start with nearly 38,000 students served in the year 2000.

I have carried my passion for early childhood education with me to the U.S. Senate. I continue to believe that it is absolutely critical that we do more to help our young people prepare to begin school and it is why I was pleased to work with Senators JEFFORDS and STEVENS to help pass the Early Learning Opportunities Act of 2000. Still, we must now do more to help those teachers who educate our youngest children.

The results of a survey undertaken by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services over the past two years has shown a significant correlation between the quality of education a child receives and the amount of education that child's teacher possesses. That is, the more education a teacher has, the more effectively they teach their students cognitive skills, and the more likely that students are to act upon those skills.

Current Federal law requires that 50 percent of all Head Start teachers must have an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree in early childhood education or a related field with teaching experience by 2003. Under Ohio law, by 2007, all Head Start teachers must have at least an associates degree. The more education our teachers have, the better off our children will be. Unfortunately, as we all know, education is expensive.

In Ohio today, only 11.3 percent—242—of the 2,126 Head Start teachers employed in the state have a bachelor's degree. Additionally, less than 1 percent—20—of Ohio's Head Start teachers have a graduate degree. We must do more to help our teachers afford the education that will be used to help educate our children.

Recruiting and retaining Head Start and early childhood teachers continues to be a challenge for Ohio and other states. The Loan Forgiveness for Head Start Teachers Act of 2003 will help communities, schools and other funded Head Start providers to meet the challenge of recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. It is one of the best ways that I know of where we can make a real difference in the lives of our most precious resource—our children.

I am pleased to have been able to work with the National Head Start Association and Ohio Head Start Association, and my colleague Senator FEINSTEIN, on this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to join as cosponsors of this bill.